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Report Highlights:

Several large European retailers have launched EUREPGAP, a harmonized third-party certification scheme. Mainly British and Dutch retailers have indicated that they will start requesting EUREPGAP certification from fresh produce suppliers starting in 2003 or 2004.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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Several large European retailers have recently launched a harmonized third-party certification scheme for their suppliers of fresh produce. The mainly Dutch and UK retailers created the Euro Retailer Producer Working Group (EUREP) in 1997, which has worked with producer and certification groups to establish a standard for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) for fresh produce. The final standard was presented at the EUREPGAP 2001 Conference in Bologna, Italy on October 10-12, 2001, along with a list of accredited certifiers. Retailers present at the conference indicated that they have started working with suppliers to ensure that their produce is EUREPGAP certified by 2003 or 2004. See the Annex for a list of participating retailers.

EUREPGAP is a standard for production practices up to the farm gate. It includes integrated crop and pest management best practices as well as worker welfare standards. This initiative follows a trend in certain EU countries for individual retailers to impose their own third-party certified standards on suppliers in response to recent food safety scares in Europe. As the interface between consumers and producers, retailers consider that consumers hold them responsible for the safety of products sold in their stores, particularly in the case of retailer-branded products. In addition, retailers are able to use their strict certification requirements as a marketing tool to consumers concerned about food safety and worker welfare issues.

In order to avoid a situation where suppliers of multiple retailers are required to be certified to multiple standards, the retailers agreed to work together to develop EUREPGAP as a benchmark standard. In addition, existing standards (such as "Farm-assured" in the UK or AENOR in Spain) could be compared to EUREPGAP and determined to be equivalent. While individual retailers may still impose requirements above and beyond EUREPGAP, they have agreed to recognize EUREPGAP certification as the baseline. Several certifiers have already been ISO 65-accredited to the EUREPGAP standard and have begun certifying producers.

If participating European retailers begin requiring EUREPGAP certification, US suppliers of produce that can easily be sourced elsewhere may lose sales to EUREPGAP-certified suppliers. However, not all European retailers have signed on to the initiative and participating retailers have stated that they are willing to work with suppliers to help them come into compliance. In addition, there is scope for existing certification schemes to be determined to be equivalent to EUREPGAP. US-based organizations such as the Produce Marketing Association and the United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association are coordinating with EUREPGAP representatives to find common ground between US and European industry standards. According to the EUREP website, only one US-based certifier, PrimusLabs, has applied for accreditation to EUREPGAP, but has not yet completed the process. For further information on accredited certifiers, see the EUREPGAP website at <http://www.eurep.org>.

There are plans to extend EUREPGAP to other products, such as meats and grains, although these plans are still in the early stages. In addition, a larger group of retailers have created the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), which would address standards throughout the rest of the supply chain (EUREPGAP just covers up to the farm gate). GFSI is also in the early stages of implementation and rather than developing its own standard, will instead provide a set of "key elements" against which other standards can be benchmarked and approved. GFSI representatives have indicated that EUREPGAP or equivalent standards would be automatically approved under GFSI for production practices up to the farm gate. See GAINS report E21086

for more information regarding GFSI.

Annex - Retailer members of EUREPGAP

Company	Country
Ahold	Netherlands
Albert Heijn	Netherlands
Asda	UK
Coop Italia	Italy
Coop Norway	Norway
Delhaize	Belgium
DRC/Belgium Auction Market	Belgium
Eroski	Spain
ICA	Sweden
Kesko	Finland
Kooperativa Forderbund	Sweden
Laurus	Netherlands
Marks & Spencer	UK
Safeway	UK
Sainsbury's	UK
Somerfield	UK
Spar Österreich	Austria
Superquinn	Ireland
Superunie	Netherlands
Tesco	UK
Trade Service Nederland BV	Netherlands
Waitrose	UK

Source: EUREP website: <http://www.eurep.org>